



INTERAGENCY NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE: Immediately
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SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST MONITORS 537-ACRE COONEY FIRE USE PROJECT

SPRINGVILLE, CA ... Fire officials continue to monitor the Cooney Wildland Fire Use incident. The single tree lightning fire that was first discovered around 8 a.m. on August 1, has grown to become the largest Wildland Fire Use in the history of the Sequoia National Forest. The fire has now burned over 500 acres consuming brush, pine needles and small trees. "It is these types of fuels that contribute to the large fire problems we have seen over the last decade throughout the west," says District Fire Management Officer (DFMO) Paul Gibbs. Due to it's location, this fire is being managed cooperatively between Sequoia National Forest and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Visitors traveling into the backcountry near the fire are advised to watch for active fire, dense smoke, rolling debris, and unstable trees. Currently, all trails are open but Forest Service officials are not recommending travel north of the pasture where the Little Kern River and Tamarack Creeks meet. Trails in the fire area may be closed as needed in order to provide for public safety. Please check with the local Forest Service or Park Service officials if you plan to travel in the areas north of Rifle Creek and east of Wet Meadows for the most current information, prior to your departure. While the fire has not yet burned into Sequoia National Park, there is the potential for it to spread to the southern end near Wet Meadows.

According to Gibbs, "Wildland fire has played an essential roll in maintaining a healthy ecosystem for centuries in the Golden Trout Wilderness. This ecosystem depends on frequent low intensity fires to function naturally. Wildland Fire Use is the preferred option for returning fire to this area after a century of fire suppression. It is these types of fires which help prevent large and damaging fires like the Manter and McNally fires of 2000 and 2003."

The Silver fire, Sirretta fire and Pine fire are additional "Wildland Fire Use" incidents the Forest continues to monitor. For more information about Wildland Fire Use, contact Deputy Forest Fire Management Officer Brent Skaggs at (559) 784-1500. For further questions regarding the Cooney Fire, please call Public Affairs Officer Denise Alonzo at (559) 539-2607, ext. 212. You can get updated information by calling (559) 539-2607 ext 292 and listen to a fire information recording.

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